



December 31, 2020

Commissioner Timothy Brodrick,
Chairman, Amesbury Conservation Commission

On behalf of the Lake Gardner Improvement Association, I wish to state that we are very pleased that the Commission has officially issued a Certificate of Compliance for DEP File 0021173, 79 High Street, Amesbury. The retaining wall structure has been installed, using historic granite from the Whittier Bridge north pier, and the drainage system designed to prevent erosion on the beach has been deemed a success. Thanks to your former chairman, Kinsey Boehl, for his assistance in validating the efficacy of the project.

This marks the next-to-last step in a lengthy and arduous process to redress the sad condition of the beach, which has experienced a long decline. This effort, begun in the past decade, when the Conservation Commission indicated that the erosion problem at the beach would have to be resolved before the beach area could be again maintained. Without annual maintainance, crabgrass has overtaken fully two thirds of the former sand beach. This has caused annual problems with ground hornets, which require the services of an exterminator. Additionally, we have experienced an unwanted increase in goose activity, attracted by the grass, which soil the areas and pollute the water, contributing to intermittent closures of the beach. Without regular maintenance, erosion continued to degrade the quality of the sand, which is now mostly coarse gravel, unpleasant to the touch and unsuitable for children to build sand structures.

Many obstacles to restoring the beach arose over the years, notably the requirement of a study of freshwater mussels in the lake to determine the effect of sand nourishment. As you may recall, that study concluded that any addition of sand would actually *improve* the habitat for the mussels! Other issues, such as design, funding, and incorporation of the historic granite (which had to be cut), needed to be overcome in the process. It is therefore with great relief that the City finally finds itself on the verge of success in restoring the beach.

The recently approved step has finally provided the outcome for which we had hoped when the overall project was envisioned. With this penultimate phase now complete, the board of the Lake Gardner Improvement Association expresses its unqualified support for the City of Amesbury's plan for restoration and renourishment of the Lake Gardner Beach. The drainage system now in place should reduce or even eliminate the need for repeated beach nourishment, but an initial re-nourishment is essential in order to bring the recreational area back to what it was before its decline. We further suggest that the City return to the practice of maintaining the surface quality of the beach and preventing re-incursion of the crabgrass.

Lake Gardner Beach is a gem, a treasured asset of the City of Amesbury, worthy of celebrating. A true "urban beach," it is even more rare and special, as it is within walking distance of the city center. It was once a special place of which we were all proud and it can be once again, but it needs our help first. We encourage this Commission to support this final step in the restoration of the Lake Gardner Beach.

Bruce A. McBrien
President, Lake Gardner Association